Hotel Review: Watch Hill Inn

Johnny Jet May 29, 2022
I travel to 20+ countries a year sharing my firsthand knowledge of reward travel, travel credit card deals, travel tips and more.

A big thanks to Watch Hill Inn for hosting our stay so we could provide this detailed review of our experience.

My family started vacationing in Watch Hill in Rhode Island back when I was a kid and it quickly became a regular family vacation spot. We spent countless unforgettable long summer weekends at Ocean House, the iconic Grand Dame of Watch Hill, and now that I have children of my own, I continue the tradition with them. You can read all about our Ocean House experience with our son here. Our daughter hasn't stayed there yet but hopefully soon!

What I didn't know is that Ocean House is managed by Ocean House Collection, which owns and operates two other hotels in the area – Watch Hill Inn in Watch Hill and Weekapaug Inn in nearby Weekapaug. All three properties are part of the Relais & Chateaux portfolio.

We checked in to Watch Hill Inn and had an incredible stay that was both luxurious and family-friendly, a wonderful combination! Here's everything you need to know to plan your own Watch Hill getaway at Watch Hill Inn.

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A Bit About Watch Hill

Watch Hill sits at the most-southwestern point in all of Rhode Island and is an affluent neighborhood in the seaside town of Westerly. It has been described by the New York Times as a community "with a strong sense of privacy and of discreetly used wealth," in contrast with "the overpowering castles of the very rich" in nearby Newport. It's tony, for sure, but also reasonably laidback and surrounded by scenery as natural and beautiful as any part of the country.

It's such a special spot that over the decades, it's caught the eyes of more than a few celebrities. The seaside resort has welcomed famous guests, including Albert Einstein, Douglas Fairbanks, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Groucho Marx, David Niven and Jean Harlow. But of course, the most notable current resident is Taylor Swift, who purchased a sprawling 11,000 square foot home, sitting on five acres in Watch Hill. The home was originally built in 1930 for the Harkness family, heirs to Standard Oil.

Watch Hill is home to the historic Flying Horse Carousel, the oldest operating carousel in the United States (where the horses are suspended from chains). It's definitely a highlight of summer in Watch Hill, operating every year from June to Labor Day and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 and in 1987, was declared a National Historic Landmark.

Arrival

Guests arriving to Watch Hill Inn actually check in at Ocean House and then head down the hill (you can either walk, drive or be escorted in one of the hotel's Mercedes) to Watch Hill Inn. We were greeted with champagne (lemonade for the kids!) and some fun toys for the little ones as well. The greeting is extremely welcoming with great attention to detail and really got our getaway off on the right foot.

Location

The first thing you'll appreciate about Watch Hill Inn is its ideal location right at the beginning of Watch Hill Village. Just steps from the inn's front door is the main stretch of shops and restaurants and just past them, the beach. You can't find a better location in terms of proximity to everything you'll want to do in Watch Hill.

The Rooms

Watch Hill Inn has 21 suite-style rooms, all of them extremely spacious and comfortable. We had the pleasure of staying in the Eagle's Nest, which is tucked into the attic of the Watch Hill Inn building. But make no mistake, this is no regular 'attic'. At more than 1,600 square feet, this room is as big as a house with two bedrooms and two bathrooms, a fully-furnished kitchen, en suite washer and dryer and a large living room. Be warned, in some places, the pitched ceilings are low and you may knock your noggin but you're unlikely to do it more than once!

The loft-like feeling of our room gave it an extremely comfy and cozy feeling and despite the overall space being so big, it still felt warm and intimate.

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There are two bedrooms, a master bedroom with a king-size bed …

… and a second bedroom with a trundle bed, perfect for the kids. The kids loved sleeping on the trundle bed but took turns hanging out in the crib to read and draw! Each bedroom, as well as the living room, has a smart TV but make sure you sign out of all your accounts before you leave!

In the living room, we found lots of board games like Family Trivial Pursuit and Operation, which reminded both me and my wife of our childhoods, growing up and having family game nights. The games were nostalgic for sure and a great way to pass the evenings sans TV and technology. My wife has already ordered both games on Amazon to arrive when we return home since the kids enjoyed them so much. They'll serve as a reminder of our Watch Hill vacation.

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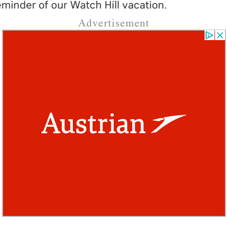

Having a kitchen and laundry facilities in the room really made our stay. Traveling with little kids isn't easy (hard but so worth it!) so conveniences along the way are a big deal. Having a fridge where we could keep milk and yogurt and a washer and dryer to clean the inevitable messes made a world of difference. The fridge came stocked with water in stainless steel water bottles (that guests can keep), soda and a bottle of champagne. There was also a much-appreciated (and tasty!) welcome amenity of cheese and breadsticks.

From our top-floor perch, we had beautiful views all around of Little Narragansett Bay and downtown Watch Hill Village. The window seats along the living room are the perfect spot to sit and relax and take in the view (or enjoy a bowl of cereal!)

The sunset views do not disappoint!

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Use of Ocean House and Weekapaug Inn Amenities

As guests of Watch Hill Inn, you'll have access to Ocean House, the grand yellow hotel at the top of the hill, overlooking the ocean. It's just a short, four-minute walk from Watch Hill Inn and you'll have unrestricted access not just to the beach (where we spent a lot of time) but to a host of complimentary activities at Ocean House (and Weekapaug Inn, seven miles away).

At Ocean House, you can check out the daily cooking classes and take advantage of nature walks, and stargazing. At Weekapaug Inn, you can go crabbing or take a boating excursion led by the inn's dedicated Naturalist Teddy, a charming and extremely knowledgeable guide who our kids instantly became enamored with. You can also stay fit with virtual spin, kickboxing or HIIT classes in Ocean House's Movement Studio. Check out a sample resort calendar here to see what activities you can enjoy at all three properties.

The beach at Ocean House is pretty spectacular, with sweeping views of the Atlantic and Block Island and Montauk in the distance, and Ocean House behind.

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For me, one of the highlights of visiting Watch Hill is visiting Sam, who was the lifeguard when my family and I started visiting Ocean House decades ago. He works there still and every time I'm in Watch Hill, we see each other and it's one of the best parts of the trip for me.

Dining Options

Because all the rooms have a fully functioning kitchen, you can stop at a nearby grocery store (there's a Stop N Shop four miles away) to pick up some essentials to see you through your stay.

But it's also good to know that Watch Hill Inn has a Lobby Lounge with a complimentary continental breakfast, afternoon charcuterie and drinks and evening treats that you can enjoy right there on the sun deck or back in your room.

In the mornings, we got fresh fruit and yogurt for the kids and indulged in the incredibly delicious pain au chocolat. I've had my fair share of pain au chocolat in my life and outside of France, they often go wrong but at Watch Hill Inn, they nail them. So soft, flaky and tender … my wife said they might just be the best she's ever had!

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For lunch and dinner, you'll have to look off-property but in the high season (Memorial Day to Labor Day) there are plenty of options right outside the inn's front door. The Olympia Tea Room is a popular choice (note: they don't take reservations) and there are lots of takeout choices too, if you just feel like picking something up and eating in your room.

For a quick lunch, hit the St. Clair Annex (cash only), where you can get local favorites like lobster rolls and clam chowder as well as burgers and fries, ice cream and, my favorite, fresh-made orangeade, which catapults me back in time to being a kid and vacationing in Watch Hill with my family. **GOOD TO KNOW:** Restaurants are closed on Tuesdays in Watch Hill and on Mondays in Westerly.

Mercedes-Benz Hotel Partnership

Guests of Watch Hill Inn (and Ocean House) can use one of four of the hotel's four Mercedes-Benz vehicles to explore the local area at no additional charge. The hotel has an additional four cars that are used for guests who require transportation assistance during their visit.

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Overall

There's not much to not like about a summer getaway in Watch Hill. Worth noting is that if you visit during the off-season, not everything will be open, though you may appreciate the more laidback atmosphere of pre-Memorial Day, before the summer rush. But either way, it's an idyllic playground with views for days and memories and traditions just waiting to be made.

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KEVIN C BOGLE | JUNE 2, 2022 AT 10:06 AM | REPLY

Although the location is incredible – the customer service at The Watch Hill Inn is not very good. Remain very careful when choosing this location for a vacation.

HEATHERP | JUNE 6, 2022 AT 12:06 AM | REPLY

I grew up in Watch Hill and was so happy to see a pic of Sam the lifeguard! Your story is a wonderful mix of history and the new Watch Hill.

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